

side of the wheel, and I stared hard at the phantom ball before it disappeared.

2. That it was some form of psychic phenomena.

If the experience had happened after dinner I might well be accused of having dined not wisely but too well! but the incident took place at about 4 p.m.

Needless to say I looked for phantom balls for the rest of my stay at Monte but without success.

C. BOUSTEAD.

On January 26th, 1925, Mrs. Cedric Boustead sent a corroborative statement, as follows:

With reference to your letter asking for a corroborative account of my husband's peculiar experience at Monte Carlo it was as follows: We had been playing in the early afternoon at roulette in the *Salle Privée* of the Casino, and having lost a certain amount of money agreed to return to the hotel to tea. As we were passing through the *Salle Schmidt*, commonly known as the Kitchen, where one can play in 10 franc stakes, my husband stopped at the first roulette table while I walked on to the first *Trente et Quarante* table. I heard him call me and walked back, when he told me in a great state of excitement that he had just seen two balls in the roulette wheel which was slowing up after the coup. He said that one was the real ball and the other obviously a phantasm, and that the phantom ball was between 6 and 34, which numbers lie adjacent on the wheel. I told him to back both numbers for the following coup, which he was just in time to do, and sure enough 34 was the winning number. As far as I am aware 34 has never been a favourite number of his. He was exceedingly definite about having seen the second ball stop where it was lying. I shall be glad to give you any information further than this account which you may require.

D. JOYCE BOUSTEAD.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH TELEPATHY?

THE attention so justly excited by Prof. Gilbert Murray's experiments and by Lord Balfour's endorsement of them has led to a prolonged discussion of the subject of telepathy in the public press, to which Dr. Thouless's letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, reprinted in the April *Journal*, was a most valuable contribution. I

am glad that it has been brought to the notice of members of the Society, and am tempted to improve the occasion further. For really the situation is most instructive, and has vividly brought out the weak points in the position of believers and of disbelievers in telepathy alike.

I shall most fitly begin by commenting on the foibles of the latter. Messrs. Ray Lankester and Bryan Donkin are of course free to disbelieve in telepathy, as no one contends that the evidence for it is coercive; but they should concede a right to believe in it to those to whom it seems sufficient. Instead of which, in their attacks on Lord Balfour in the *Times*, they show themselves the faithful pupils of W. K. Clifford. It was from him, many years ago, that they learnt the ineffable turpitude of letting belief outstrip knowledge, and yet they themselves also appear to believe that they can *prove* the beliefs which they cherish. They identify science with dogma, and will allow no one to question the infallibility of what was scientific orthodoxy forty or fifty years ago. So they seem blissfully unaware of the results of modern reflection on the theory and methods of science, and seem strange survivals in an age which has dethroned Newton for Einstein, and through its scientific leaders declares that a scientific doctrine is a policy and not a creed! Moreover, it is now nearly thirty years ago that William James explained to us the nature and functions of the will to believe, and discredited the ideal of a purely intellectualist method of knowing.

Sir Herbert Stephen at first sight appears to hark back to a still more antiquated attitude. He seems to question the validity of pure science itself, and to reject the existence of telepathy, because it has been under investigation for thirty years, and has not yet superseded the more ordinary modes of communication between minds. So he infers that "it will never be of solid or enduring use to human beings," and that "for all practical purposes there is no such thing." It is intelligible that such apparently Philistine and obscurantist sentiments should have provoked a rebuke from Sir Oliver Lodge in *Nature* for May 9. Other disbelievers have appealed to Prof. Coover's researches as proof positive that there is nothing in telepathy, although, as I think I showed in my review of his book in *Proceedings*, Part LXXVI., this is by no means the only possible interpretation of Prof. Coover's evidence. Still it is clear that the case for tele-

pathy does not yet carry conviction to several distinct types of mind.

It is natural therefore to ask who is to blame for this deplorable situation, and difficult to acquit the advocates of telepathy of contributing to it. For it is unfortunately true that they have not yet obtained *experimental control* over the phenomenon. It may well be, of course, that no phenomenon into which a psychological factor enters can ever exhibit simply mechanical regularity; but at present the success of a telepathic experiment cannot be anticipated with anything like such confidence as the strokes of an expert player of any game.

Sir Herbert Stephen therefore is quite justified in saying that telepathy is not of any practical use. He is right also in holding that this practical defect has a bearing on its theoretic truth. For it very much affects belief. If telepathic phenomena were controllable, and common, and trustworthy in ordinary life, it would not be possible to persist in an attitude of disbelief towards them. Thus, though no one knows what electricity is, no one hesitates to use it on this account. What, therefore, Sir Herbert Stephen is really urging is that the belief in telepathy is not confirmed pragmatically, *i.e.* by its working. It is not yet able to stand the pragmatic test. But inchoate truths never can. If it had got so far as to stand it, the dispute about it would cease; for it would not be worth any one's while to deny the truth of what would have become a very useful and important means of communication between minds. Sir Herbert Stephen is wrong only in assuming that because telepathy is not working at present, it never will be got to work. For the history of science shows that many of the forces of nature have remained obscure, disputable and useless for centuries, and then been established as true, useful and important.

To render telepathy useful, therefore, by discovering how to control the conditions of its occurrence, is the most convincing way of establishing its truth. For it is the only way of overcoming prejudices which will never yield to argument, nor to the report of experiments which the objectors have not seen, and will not observe. And it should be the chief concern of those who already believe in telepathy as a scientific fact to make it also a practical success.

In saying this I do not underrate the difficulties of their task.

For the truth is that *in no matters of psychology* have we yet attained a scientifically fruitful method of inquiry. Psychologists have laboured, long and arduously, under the impression that, by imitating the methods which the physical sciences hit upon after many centuries of failure, they could obtain a guarantee of scientific success. After fifty years of experimentation on these lines, pursued by crowds of highly trained experts in expensive laboratories, it is pretty clear that this belief has proved illusory. The most successful method of operating on the human soul at present appears to be that of "psycho-analysis," which does *not* employ the assumptions of physics but, in spite of the gravest theoretic and moral objections, seems to be efficacious in a considerable percentage of the cases so treated. Psychical researchers are conducting psychological explorations in a different direction, with far too exiguous resources in men and equipment, and a correspondingly modest measure of success. But if they have the faith to persevere, they may yet be rewarded by rendering indisputable discoveries which must revolutionize man's outlook upon life. At the moment, moreover, we have one line of inquiry which *can* employ the experimental test. I refer to the suggestion that Prof. Murray's results are due to auditory hyperaesthesia. As Dr. Thouless has pointed out, hyperaesthesia would be a *physical* fact, and its processes should conform to known physical laws. Let experiments therefore be made with Prof. Murray's auditory apparatus. Let us ascertain how far he can hear, and under what conditions: for possibly, with the aid of a microphone, he may be able to hear whispers all over the house! I dare not add, let Sir Ray Lankester and Sir Bryan Donkin themselves conduct these experiments: for if they had desired to investigate, they would no doubt have done so (like Prof. Lehmann, with his theory of "unconscious whispering") *before* alleging hyperaesthesia in a merely dialectical way.

F. C. S. SCHILLER.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of THE JOURNAL OF THE S.P.R.

MADAM,—The newspaper test reported in the *Journal* for February, 1925, by Rev. C. Drayton Thomas brings to a focus a point that has occurred before but which has, I believe, never received the